



The Forward

December 2007

Letter from the Bishop

Advent is a time of watching and waiting and preparing for the coming of the King. With the King comes the joy and peace of the Kingdom of God. Over these past few months, I have traveled all over the diocese to meet with clergy and lay leaders for worship and reflection on the mission God has placed before us. We are all too aware of the obstacles in our road. More importantly, though, we are beginning to live more fully into the gifts that God has given us to move beyond the obstacles toward the Kingdom.

I am encouraged by the willingness to move forward in new and exciting ways together. Our movement toward the Kingdom requires us to spend some time in preparation and waiting. For many of us, it's hard to resist the temptation to just start 'doing things,' instead of waiting on God and engaging the process. The fact of the matter is that discernment does not happen on our time schedules. Instead, we are engaged in a process of becoming more and more the people God has called us to be.

As we engage this wonderful new day, I would ask for your prayers. Pray for the Holy Spirit to release in us the gifts that we need for the building up of the Kingdom in this place. Pray for your bishop, the clergy, and all the people of this diocese. God is leading us to new places and will continue to touch us so that we see the path ever more clearly.

We Are the Diocese! by the Rev. John Wesley

Bishop Sean is dynamic, full of energy, positive, and very personable. These personal qualities explain in part why he was elected on the very first ballot. But that is only part of the story. The people in the pews have realized for some time that "business as usual" in this Diocese was not going to accomplish much needed change. Our Diocese...the Episcopal congregations of Northwestern Pennsylvania...we are at a turning point. Not only have many congregations been in numerical and financial decline

for some time, but the all important quality of unity between our geographically separated congregations seemed lacking. This sense of disconnection caused some congregations to voice feeling somehow "outside" of the mainstream of life in the Diocese. So, Bishop Sean, in addition to his encouraging personal qualities, was also elected because he also seems to represent Hope – hope that things can change and that our own dreams for our congregations can be realized. Of course we want our congregations growing

rather than declining; and, no matter where our congregation is geographically, we want to feel an equal part of Diocesan life and enjoy a sense of connection with every other Episcopal congregation in Northwestern Pennsylvania. This is what we all want, and, happily, we have a Bishop who not only wants the same things we do, but who also recognizes that, for these dreams to be fulfilled, we all need to be part of the process that will help the necessary changes happen. One person can't do it; in fact, one person shouldn't

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The Forward

We are the Diocese! Con't

do it, because WE are the Diocese.

One step forward toward the new life we all want to see will come soon in 2008. Exactly how is not completely clear right now. But, possibly through the Deaneries, every congregation will be asked for suggestions on critical questions like –

- What is the Mission of our Diocese?
- How can we most effectively communicate with one another

so that nobody feels left out?

- What structure will best produce the things that are needed to accomplish our common Mission?
- How do we find people throughout the Diocese who have the skills, interest and experience to do what needs to be done?

As this process unfolds, the hope is that we will grow closer. What a beautiful thing it will be for the

mutual support and strength that comes from close bonds of connection to become a part of everything that we do. The hope for this process is that every individual and every congregation feels equally valued. And, when that becomes our reality, then we will have discovered what it truly means to say: We are the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Eldred Celebrating 100 Years of Ministry

Join St. Matthew's as they celebrate 100 years of ministry in their community. They will be holding their last service on Thursday, January 17th, 2008, at 7:00 PM. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend and help celebrate with St. Matthew's.



St. Matthew's, Eldred



Olmstead Manor

Lenten Clergy Retreat

Clergy, please mark your calendars! There will be a Lenten Clergy Retreat from February 10-12, 2008. It will be held at Olmstead Manor in Smethport, PA. All clergy are encouraged to attend. The cost will be \$124.00 per person. If any clergy feel they may need assistance with the cost, please contact Vanessa at the Diocesan Church Center at 456-4203 or at vbutler@dionwpa.org. More information will be coming in the weeks to come.

Discernment of Call

Discernment is a process by which we discover God's activity, movement, and direction in our lives. Personal as well as communal discernment is crucial when one is wrestling with a call to ordained ministry.

In January, there will be a training program for a diocesan discernment group which will enable them to more effectively carry out this important ministry. During Lent, several individuals will have the opportunity to explore their call within this context.

Others who may be considering a call to ordained ministry should first be in conversation with their priest for guidance and direction. The next step would be for the priest to contact either Bishop Sean or Canon Martha.



New Faces in Different Places

By the Rev. Canon Martha Ishman

Saying that the diocese is in a time of transition is perhaps a bit of an understatement. The bishop and his staff are working through many issues of change and will continue to do so. In addition, there are many congregations at transition points. Three of them have engaged the services of trained interim ministry specialists. The first is St. John's in Franklin. The Rev. Brian Reid has been called there as the part time priest-in-charge. St. Clement's in Greenville has also called a part time interim. His name is the Rev. Gary McElroy and he hails from the Diocese of Ohio. The Church of the Ascension in Bradford has called the Rev. Lynn Sinnott to be their full time priest-in-charge. She comes to us from the Diocese of Rochester.

While the context of each of these ministries is very different, the basic call is quite similar. Whenever a congregation has a change in pastoral leadership there are important issues which need to be addressed. This enables the congregation to engage the search process in a more open and healthy manner. To that end, we are very blessed to have these individuals. Please extend to them a warm welcome.

If you have news, story ideas, or pictures that you would like to share with the diocese, please contact Vanessa at the Diocesan Church Center at 814-456-4203 or at vbutler@dionwpa.org.

Coming Ordinations

The Diocese will be celebrating two ordinations in January of 2008.

The first will be the Rev. Bill Ellis, who will be ordained to the priesthood. He is currently the deacon at Church of the Holy Trinity in Houtzdale. His ordination will be Saturday, January 19th, at 11:00 AM at Holy Trinity, Houtzdale.

The second ordination will be Geoffrey Wild, who will be ordained to the transitional diaconate. He is currently a member of Church of the Epiphany in Grove City. His ordination will be Sunday, January 27th at 5:00 PM at Epiphany, Grove City.

We hope everyone will come and support Deacon Bill and Geoff as they take this next step.

Sharon Celebrates End of Capital Campaign

St. John's, Sharon, recently celebrated the end of their three year "Second Century Building in Faith" capital campaign at their service of Lessons and Carols on December 15.

The campaign was undertaken to fund a \$1.8 million building project. The project included tearing out a gymnasium and Olympic-size swimming pool and replacing them with a social hall and Christian Education space. It also included renovations to the existing building, like a new slate roof and painting of the church interior.

The project was started in the early 2000s, when the parish decided it was time to do something about the swimming pool, which had been closed for almost thirty years due to asbestos. The decision to take out the pool was a difficult one, as two generations of the Sharon community had learned to swim at St. John's since the pool had been installed in the 1930s.

The project got jump-started when two sisters, who passed away within weeks of each other, left the church \$750,000. Various other fundrais-

ers followed, including some initiated by the church's youth.

The capital campaign was started three years ago, when the congregation was asked to give above and beyond their regular pledge. Over the next three years, the congregation gave over \$608,000 to the project.

Fr. Doug Dayton gives a lot of credit to the congregation for giving so sacrificially at a time when many were in rough times themselves. He also said that the parish is thrilled with their new building.



The new Allen Hall



The Second Century follow-up team – Left to right – Bill and June Taylor, Randy Beck, Beth Krivak, Dorothy and Frank O'Stafy, Bishop Rowe, Donna Starmoolis, Rev Doug Dayton, Darlee Jackson and Bob Edeburn (missing from photo is John Krivak)